

\*\*\* NETANSWERS INTERNET EXTRA \*\*\*

For the week of January 5, 1998

This issue, Kevin talks about telnet, a text-based interface to Internet resources. Although telnet sites aren't as popular as they used to be, having a telnet client around can still prove very useful. Read on to learn why.

=\*=\*= TELNET =\*=\*=

Telnet is one of the simplest, and oldest, Internet tools. It lets you log in to another computer using a text-only interface. Telnet provides nothing more than a simple terminal window for reading text and typing. If you know a little about telnet, you're probably thinking, "Get with it, Kevin. People don't want text, they want graphics, they want the web. Stop living in the 1980's." True, a few years ago you couldn't swing a dead cat without hitting a telnet site. Today, they're relatively few and far between. But telnet isn't quite dead and buried, and it never will be. For some tasks, it's the only tool that will do the job. So put an A-Ha record on the turntable and I'll show you why.

Hundreds of library catalogs are online and accessible via telnet, from the smallest small-town library to the Library of Congress. If your local library is, you can search its catalog from home and even find out if the books that you want are checked out. Another popular use for telnet is accessing MUDs -- Multi-User Dungeon games. MUDs are text-based adventure games in which you can explore, interact with other players and solve puzzles. I'll talk more about MUDs in a future issue -- if you're curious about them now, visit Yahoo's index of MUD resources ([http://www.yahoo.com/Recreation/Games/Internet\\_Games/MUDs\\_\\_MUSHes\\_\\_MOOs\\_\\_etc\\_/](http://www.yahoo.com/Recreation/Games/Internet_Games/MUDs__MUSHes__MOOs__etc_/)).

The examples I've given so far involve accessing telnet sites that are open to the public. That is, no password is required when you connect (or if one is, as with MUDs, you can get an account for free). If you have access to a private Internet-connected computer, you may be able to access it via telnet. For example, you may be able to use telnet to access the computer at work or school to check your e-mail there if you have an account on that machine. You'll have to ask your system administrator if this is possible, but if they use a Unix or VMS computer for electronic mail, chances are good that you'll be able to use telnet to get your mail while you're away. (Remember, telnet is text only, so you can only use it to access computers with a text interface. You can't telnet to a Windows 95 or Mac computer.)

Before you can access telnet sites, you'll need a telnet client. (A client is a program that lets you access Internet servers. For instance, a web browser is a client for communicating with web sites.) If you use Windows 95, you already have a simple telnet client (\WINDOWS\TELNET.EXE). The built-in telnet client is bare-bones but will do the job. More powerful telnet clients are available, such as NetTerm (a 32-bit, \$20 shareware app) and EWAN (a free 16-bit Windows application). Macintosh users should look no further than BetterTelnet, also free software. (You can download any of these programs from the Web. URLs are listed near the end of this newsletter.)

To use a telnet client, you need to download one, decompress it (see issue #3 for info on decompressing software) and install it. Log into CompuServe with CIM as

usual, then run the telnet client. You'll need to know the address of the computer you want to access. Find the "Open Connection" or "Connect to Site" command and enter the site name. A good way to start your explorations is by telnetting to freenet-in-a.cwru.edu -- this is the Cleveland Free-Net, a popular community computer system that offers information about health care, education, technology, government, and recreation.

If you would like to try your hand at a MUD, telnet to my personal favorite: LambdaMOO. Its address is "lambda.moo.mud.org 8888". The 8888 is called the port number. (A port number is where the server listens for connections.) Most telnet sites use the default port number, 23, but not all do. If you want to connect to a site that uses a different port number, you need to tell your telnet client -- there's a place for the port number under the "Open Connection" command. If there's no port number listed, don't type one and you'll connect to the default.

There are still a lot of older telnet sites on the Net, but new ones are rare. HYTELNET (<http://moondog.usask.ca/hytelnet/>) is a comprehensive index to publicly-accessible telnet sites. It lists a plethora of libraries, schools and government sites that offer information via telnet. Because new telnet sites are rare, however, the HYTELNET index is no longer being updated. There will always be some use for telnet, but publicly-accessible telnet sites are slowly dwindling away in favor of web sites.

==\*== SOFTWARE MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE ==\*==

BetterTelnet (Mac): <http://www.cstone.net/~rbraun/mac/telnet/>

EWAN (Windows 16-bit): <http://www.lysator.liu.se/~zander/ewan.html>

NetTerm (Windows 16- and 32-bit): [http://starbase.neosoft.com/~zkrr01/html/netterm\\_.html](http://starbase.neosoft.com/~zkrr01/html/netterm_.html)

==\*== SITES MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE ==\*==

HytelNet: <http://moondog.usask.ca/hytelnet/>

Yahoo's MUD index: [http://www.yahoo.com/Recreation/Games/Internet\\_Games/MUDs\\_\\_MUSHes\\_\\_MOOs\\_\\_etc\\_/](http://www.yahoo.com/Recreation/Games/Internet_Games/MUDs__MUSHes__MOOs__etc_/)

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The NetAnswers Internet Extra is free to all CompuServe members. It's available in the Internet Community Forum -- GO INETCOM and look in file library 11, "NetAnswers".

Got comments or ideas for future newsletter issues? We want to hear 'em. Just send a message to [savetz@compuserve.com](mailto:savetz@compuserve.com) (74774,2725).

I feel pretty, oh so pretty, I feel pretty and witty and bright. And I pity any girl who isn't me tonight. I feel charming, oh so charming, it's alarming how charming I feel. And so pretty that I hardly can believe I'm... copyright 1998 by Kevin Savetz.